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Reviews

The Ethical Professor: A Practical Guide to Research, Teaching and Professional Life

By Lorraine Eden, Kathy Lund Dean, and Paul M. Vaaler. New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

234 pages, paperback.

Reviewed by Siân Stephens, Middlesex University London

Adapted from the author's contributions to the Academy of Management's 'The Ethicist' blog, *The Ethical Professor: A Practical Guide to Research, Teaching and Professional Life* is an entertaining and accessible discussion of the key ethical dilemmas an academic is likely to encounter in their career. The book serves two valuable purposes: the first is to identify ethical dilemmas, and the second is to offer constructive advice on how to deal with these dilemmas. This book will allow academics to identify ethical pitfalls which newcomers to academia might otherwise struggle to recognise, and provides the reader with the opportunity to learn from the experience of the authors and their contributors. The book is targeted primarily at PhD students and early career academics, but there is something here for anyone involved in academic research, teaching or professional life. While the focus of the book is ethical challenges, the discussions are ultimately a reassuring reminder of our ability to act ethically in all areas of our profession.

The book is divided into three sections which reflect the three ways in which the performance of an academic is judged: research, ethics and service (or 'professional life'). The first-hand experiences of the authors and their colleagues make appearances throughout the book, and at the end of each section there is an interview with an academic 'thought leader'. The first

section, Ethics in Research, opens with an account of the ‘Liability of Foreignness’ which affects PhD students and early career academics who are unfamiliar with the rules of research and publication, and do not have the experience of their more senior colleagues to inform their decisions. The authors describe the liabilities of ‘newness’, ‘resource dependence’ and ‘outsiderness’ which face new entrants to the Academy, and the recognition of these experiences will be well-received by those who are currently navigating the world of academia for the first time, while also offering a useful reminder of similar experiences to those who are more established. The section goes on to discuss some ethical hazards of academic research, including a detailed account of how to deal with data and written work in an ethical way, questions about submitting similar papers to different journals at the same time, and ‘slicing and dicing’ data in order to get as many papers as possible out of one dataset. The issues covered in this chapter are important and the advice offered is clear and practical, such as the ‘originality matrix’ in Chapter 5 which can be used by academics to identify whether multiple papers are suitably distinct to be considered original.

Much of the second section, ‘Ethics in Teaching’, deals with relatively new challenges facing teaching staff in higher education, and these discussions will be equally useful to experienced academics and early career academics as we face these new challenges together. The authors reflect on problems such as the risk of a ‘race to the bottom’ in student workload and assessment as academics attempt to respond to declining student satisfaction, and the increasing availability of university-style content online, often free to access, which threatens to undermine the perceived value of a traditional university degree. In both instances the advice given is collegiate, encouraging discussion among colleagues in order to identify collaborative ways to navigate our changing environment. The chapter entitled ‘Teaching Versus Preaching’ is particularly timely and will be of great interest to those involved in teaching Business Ethics,

where the risk of ‘preaching’ rather than ‘teaching’ is great. The discussion is a valuable reminder of our positions of power in the classroom and of the respect we owe to our students.

The final section, ‘Ethics in Professional Life’, addresses a range of other ethical issues which an academic may encounter throughout their career, from unreliable job offers to the inevitable conflicts of interest which arise from the holding leadership roles in professional organisations. This section engages with behaviours which are often taken for granted but are in fact worthy of critical consideration. For example, Chapter 23 deals with the importance of ‘showing up’ (to events, meetings and conferences), and explains why it is important to attend events one has agreed to attend. This is complimented however by an acknowledgement of the limitations to academics’ time and ability to ‘serve’ in Chapter 25, Managing University Service Work, which provides helpful guidelines on how to determine which service tasks to accept and how to politely decline tasks when appropriate. The section closes with chapters about when, how and why we should pursue ‘extra-curricular’ engagements such as media engagement and consultancy work.

The target audience of the book is early career academics in the U.S.A and Canada, but there is certainly much here that will benefit academics at any stage of their career and in many countries. The topics covered in *The Ethical Professor* are particularly pertinent to senior academics and managers who have the power to lead from the front and can help protect junior colleagues from difficult decisions. The challenges addressed in this book are also highly relevant to marginalised and under-represented groups, and to anyone who may feel that they lack the respect or authority to question the status-quo. A further use of this book, which is perhaps underestimated by the authors, is that it can serve as a prompt for difficult conversations about the way in which our ability to respond ethical issues will depend on a

range of factors that are not always within our control, including but not limited to professional status, race, ethnicity and gender. I have recommended *The Ethical Professor* to my fellow early career academics, and it is a book we will keep coming back to as we progress through our careers. It is well-designed for the classroom, and the discussion questions at the end of each chapter make it easy to use in the teaching of any PhD related courses or induction sessions for new members of staff. The tone of the book and the frequent reference to the authors' and contributors' first hand experiences create the sense that the reader is being given friendly advice from a senior colleague who is keen to help (although this should not deter more senior members of staff who will find as much, if not more, to gain from this advice). Another great strength of the book is that despite being about the dilemmas which face academics, it regularly reminds the reader of some of the joys of academia. This, as much as the acknowledgement of the challenges, will be welcomed by those starting and continuing their academic career.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<https://ethicist.aom.org/>